THE LADDER

PUBLICATION

50¢

On this fourth day of July
One Thousand seven hundred and
Declaration of Independe
The Unanimous Declaration of
Thirteen United States of America
when, in the course of
human events, it becomes
necessary for one people to

July 1958

purpose of the

Daughters of BILITIS

A WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROMOTING THE INTEGRATION OF THE HOMOSEXUAL INTO SOCIETY BY:

1. Education of the variant, with particular emphasis on the psychological, physiological and sociological aspects, to enable her to understand herself and make her adjustment to society in all its social, civic and economic implications--this to be accomplished by establishing and maintaining as complete a library as possible of both fiction and non-fiction literature on the sex deviant theme; by sponsoring public discussions on pertinent subjects to be conducted by leading members of the legal, psychiatric, religious and other professions; by advocating a mode of behavior and dress acceptable to society.

2. Education of the public at large through acceptance first of the individual, leading to an eventual breakdown of erroneous taboos and prejudices; through public discussion meetings aforementioned; through dissemination of educational literature on the homosexual theme.

3. Participation in research projects by duly authorized and responsible psychologists, sociologists and other such experts directed towards further knowledge of the homosexual.

4. Investigation of the penal code as it pertains to the homosexual, proposal of changes to provide an equitable handling of cases involving this minority group, and promotion of these changes through due process of law in the state legislatures.

the Ladder

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THE LADDER is regarded as a sounding board for various points of view on the homophile and related subjects and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the organization.

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Cover by bob

My Daughter Is a Lesbian

by Mrs. DORIS LYLES

My daughter is a Lesbian. By all measures of accepted society, that is a pretty blunt statement. If I were an average mother, I wouldn't even bring this assertion out and view it furtively, even when alone. Nevertheless, I do not think I would come under what one would call average, and I say this in a far from self-satisfied manner. However, I do not believe in hiding truth under our stilted, self-imposed laws of society. Many people today are frustrated and under mental treatment because of these frustrations, simply because they refuse to face the truth and prefer to delude themselves in so many ways.

My daughter from small girlhood seemed to be a little different from the average child. For one thing, she was above average mentally and had very strong will power and determination that even in childhood seemed to brook no interference. Frankly, I believe that if I had been a dictatorial, demanding mother whose child had to bend to her ego and demands, I might have had a pretty serious case of delinquency to contend with today, instead of an intelligent, serious-minded daughter who holds a fine position in a respected professional field, lives what is for her a full, rounded-out life of contentment and security, with no frustrations or problems, at least none that amount to much.

I will be very frank in saying that I am lucky in that she found a congenial, intelligent, loving and kind "mate" in this association of which I am aware but do not understand completely as a normal mother and wife. I do not like that word "normal" applied here, for there are no two more normal persons alive than my daughter and her charming associate.

In finding out about my daughter's preferences, I had one very firm belief. I knew she would find someone of kindred tastes and lead a very circumspect life no matter what path she chose, for I knew my child and understood she could not be cheap and promiscuous, whether Lesbian or heterosexual. This thought was a great comfort and from the beginning I

knew she would need love, appreciation and understanding from me; not censure, shame or withdrawal. One thing I have done to an extent most people would feel was too much to the extreme: I have left her to her own devices and now, in her middle twenties, she leads her own life completely and when she wishes to come to me, for whatever period of time she chooses, she knows she is welcome and won't be importuned to "come oftener" and "stay longer". As a child, I led a sheltered life in which my mother dominated all my moves and actions. When she passed away, I was at completely loose ends and made a very foolish marriage which would not have happened had I been free to follow my own course in life. This had made me wary of being possessive and trying to shape and run the lives of others. As a consequence, I think I have my daughter's love and loyalty---even to a greater degree than most mothers who make demands and expect them to be carried out.

With the background of theatrical people during my childhood, I learned rather early that all of us, men or women, did not come within the realm of "norms." Maybe this is why my daughter's fate didn't seem so terrible to me. I could think of a great many worse things, such as the unhappy twenty years of marriage I had shed at the time I learned of my daughter's "difference". I spent those years with a man who was a congenital liar, who preferred a lie when the truth would have served him better, and who couldn't leave town for a week's trip as a salesman who travelled without having his quota of affairs with anyone - waitresses, nurses, - he seemed to prefer uniforms. It was a question of keeping my marriage together by not digging too deeply in the barrel, and keeping my temper, but definitely losing my self-respect. This I believe is a fate far worse for a girl. Maybe I'm wrong and maybe I should use every means within my power to help my daughter in her situation, but frankly I do not believe she needs help from me or anyone else. If ever the time should come when she feels the need for advice or counsel, I only hope I will be able to advise her wisely, but certainly not against what she believes with all her being to be her path in life.

We preach freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and even though reams and reams have been written on the subject, there are very few who will admit belief in freedom of love.

Morality and the Law

"Is it possible to tighten the laws against obscenity and lewdness yet keep them reasonable, enforceable and constitutional?"

This is the question posed in the May 26th editorial of the "San Francisco Examiner". And a timely one it is to the people of California inasmuch as hearings before a legislative committee were held during May with an eye toward tightening of said laws.

Appearing before the committee were ministers, a rabbi, a priest, a librarian, a bookseller, public prosecutors and police. And in this group, as all through society, there was "sharp yet earnest disagreement" on the question.

As pointed out in the "Examiner" editorial, "Each of us holds a general concept of what is obscene or lewd in written and pictorial material, yet it is extremely unlikely that any one of us can agree on all points with anyone else."

The "Examiner" went on to say, "The literary morality of every period is molded primarily by the home, the church, the school. It cannot be legislated. When a bluenose law is passed it either is made a dead letter by widespread public defiance or is found by the courts to violate freedom of the press, meaning your right to read and judge for yourself.

"The police always seem the last to comprehend that fact. They were before this legislative committee, as they have been before others, urging more precise (meaning more rigid) definitions of obscenity and lewdness. They complained the language of the existing law is too broad, and judicial interpretations of the law too varied.

"That is the way it should be. Judges interpret the law according to the needs of their times. Too, judges, per-

ceive far more clearly than police that faint line where the protection of public morality ends and ugly censorship begins.

"All too often the mistake of police is that they try to put some innocuous book in jail. When the court rebukes them they throw up their hands and say they need a stronger law. If they would turn their energies instead against the sleazy peddlers of blatant, commercialized pornography - and here we mean the revolting stuff that is made and distributed through secret channels - they would find that courts, juries and the public would support them.

"They and the legislators would also find that existing law serves society's needs adequately."

The staff of THE LADDER commends the "San Francisco Examiner" for taking a firm stand on this controversial issue. For whenever there is a trend toward suppression of the press, there necessarily follows the suppression of free thought. We certainly do not advocate obscenity or lewdness, but we are well aware of the differences of opinion as to what may constitute obscenity or lewdness. Only recently charges were reversed in the courts against ONE magazine (see Feb. LADDER), and the Kinsey Institute for Sex Research (see Apr. LADDER). It has become in recent times increasingly important that we look to safeguards of the free press rather than to the tightening of laws which may lead to the destruction of our American heritage of free thought and expression.

- Del Martin

COMING NEXT ISSUE

A review of the talk given by Leo J. Zeff, clinical psychologist, on "What the Eastern Religions Can Mean to You". Announcement of the Mattachine Society's annual convention to be held in New York over Labor Day weekend. More short stories, poems, letters from our readers and articles of interest to all. Don't miss it. If you're not already a subscriber become one at once.

DARK BEFORE DAWN

A story by THERESA CORELLA

I remember, when I was just past a stone's throw from adolescence, watching myself in the round mirror above my dresser, and asking in words like these: "Are you a mirror? Are you a kind of transparent wall? Are you me? or somebody else that I am?" And I remember thinking that maybe in the mirror I was in a place by itself. My better side maybe. When I turned the lights off all that stayed of this isolated world was the reflection from the window of a crescent moon and its scintillating subordinates splashed on the black surface like frozen sparks. And how else does one, just passing adolescence, think when bound in a place smaller than he feels?

For hours I tossed in my bed trying to sleep; trying not to watch the stars in my dark mirror. I tossed and turned making a shambles of the bed poor Mrs. Murphy had so carefully made up for me that morning. Dear Mrs. Murphy who cared for me like a daughter even though she had her own. I had been renting the extra room downstairs. She and her daughter Peggy slept upstairs.

First it was friendship with Peg. But how do you ignore it when it becomes so much stronger and deeper and more important than friendship that you would give your life to preserve it? Peg felt that way too. Peg was a year or two younger than I. At that age a year or two seems to make a lot of difference; you feel...well...sort of protective and maybe you think you're wiser. Anyway I had told Peg I didn't think we should see each other so much anymore; that it was better each of us made new friends. Despite our efforts our need for each other seemed undeniable. It was over a month now and I had still been trying to make Peg see that we shouldn't let ourselves get the best of us. (Whatever was meant by that.) That month I went out with Andy almost every night.

At three-thirty, on the luminous dial of my clock, I got up and dressed in the dark. What was the use trying something

you were incapable of? using brush and pigments yet not able to paint? or loving someone yet not loving him at all? That was Andy, of course, but I'm getting ahead of my story. Fully dressed at last, I slipped on my coat, pulled the collar up close about my neck and left the house, careful not to wake anyone. How quiet and still the night had been then - only the sound of distant motors on the highway beyond the high school.

For a long time I walked, wide awake and lonely. Not lonely in the sense that I was alone. Wasn't Mrs. Murphy a wonderful landlady? Wasn't Christmas still fun? And Andy - what a wonderful guy Andy was. He'd asked me a hundred times, if he'd asked me once, to marry him. (The idea not only left me cold but uneasy.)

Somewhere because of these thoughts I had turned into a small out-of-the-way bar. It was closed, of course, after hours, but the door was ajar and there was a light inside. Not that there was much light. Except for the flowing red, yellow and green lights in the Wurlitzer, and an indirect overhead light at the bar, the club was dark. Chairs were stacked upside down on round, metal tables close to the walls out of the way. A man in white coveralls was bent over a mop near the doorway to the back. "Cantch ya see?" he said, "sclosed." I nodded.

Just then a blonde appeared at the doorway. Apparently she was a little tight. I don't think it was an obnoxious sight because it seemed in accord with the nature of her face. Men, it was obvious, were crazy for her. She danced up to me extending simultaneously a hiccup and a smile. I wasn't exactly prepared for her sudden encounter but I didn't mind either. "Hello, pretty," she said in a husky blonde voice, "I want to dance with you."

In view of the fact that she'd just contributed to the juke box, I accepted.

We'd just made a couple of turns to the music when she threw her blonde head back to look into my face and said, "How'n hell you get in here?"

Timidly I glanced at her. There was something evasive in

her looks. It would have been ridiculous to label her a beauty and, by the same token, preposterous to consider her ugly. I had to laugh. "You look like something fell on you," I said, evading further questioning.

"It did," she said. "The sky. The whole damnit sky fell on me." The "it" was a hiccup. "Miles and miles." Her words seemed swollen in her mouth.

"Miles of what?" I said.

"Just miles. I'nt that enough? And le'me tell you right now, she is too!" These words were punctuated at close intervals by a jab with her forefinger on my collarbone.

"Who?"

"Was why she left me. And le'me tell you right now, I won't see her again if she wants to act that way." I ducked the jab of her jabbering finger.

"What way?" I said.

She began to cry, her head slumped on my shoulder. Under the insulated layers of drunkness I was aware of a deep sorrow. "Many's the time I..." she stopped, not heeding me. "Watch out you don't get boozled."

"No chance," I said.

"Just watch out you don't" she said, squinting an eye. And I had to duck her finger again. She'd probably noticed the movement this time because it was followed by a bewildered look which turned instantly into a deep throaty laugh; then she pulled me closer to her and swung me around, holding me very close.

"Hey, baby, com'ere!" I heard a dark, hairy voice at the rear of the bar, and felt the blonde stiffen at the command.

"That's Lou," she said, pointing in the wrong direction. "Lou for Louie," she said. "Makes you think of Louise, don't it? or Lou Ann? I tease him sometimes and call him 'lousy Lou'."

This struck me funny and for the first time in over a month I laughed. The Blonde put her head on my shoulder and laughed too - a laugh that staggered drunkenly on a voice close to tears. I knew it was time to leave.

* * * * * * *

I can still remember the dawn as I turned the corner and up the street toward Mrs. Murphy's house where Peg was. The dawn was a pink coldness, young and exhilarant, stretched tight across the sky; I felt like a vital hand in it.

Suffice it to say I never saw the woman again, but I never lost sight of myself. And although Andy never quite understood, he's happy now the way things turned out. He married a superb woman. They have two of the loveliest children I know.

And, of course, Peg and I have been happy ever since.

'WELL OF LONELINESS' MOVIE TO BE MADE

In an era when few items of news are startling or unusual, it is none the less astonishing to come across notice that the "Well of Loneliness" is to be made into a motion picture.

It has been announced that Ray Stark, a producer, has purchased the movie rights to Radclyffe Hall's classic story of Lesbianism.

"The Hollywood Reporter" states that the film rights were acquired by Seven Arts Productions and that it is understood that the film will be made for United Artists release.

The "Reporter" further states: "When the book first was published it kicked up quite a censorship storm, as it was said in some quarters that the yarn dealt with Lesbianism."

THE DISCOVERY

He had been strange since his return from school the previous evening. Nothing you could put your finger on- a certain melancholy thoughtfulness, vague, yet disturbing glances. As tho' he were still seeing me as his 'good ole mom', and yet there was a wondering. He seemed to be seeing me in a new light - with new eyes.

I could do no more than ignore the strangeness, yet it caused a tension that was apparent, for as Claire was leaving for her evening adult education course, she muttered, "Wonder what's bugging Hap? He's - well, I dunno, itching for a mother-son gab session, I guess. At least I don't have to make up an excuse for leaving you two alone tonight."

Sweet, sweet, Claire. Yet it disturbed her that Hap still didn't include her in his talks with me, although the subjects were rarely of a personal nature. It disturbed me too, in a way, yet Hap was my son and I loved him. My pleasure at having him show his preference for me dimmed any other emotions I may have felt.

I had changed into my black chino's, shirt and loafers, and as I walked into the living room Hap eyed me curiously. I couldn't return his gaze, for it had become startlingly clear to me that there would have to be a gab session tonight, only this one would be personal, and the subject must necessarily be my relationship with Claire.

Hap wasn't quite five years old when Claire came to live with me. I was thankful that he was too young to understand the situation, and put from my mind the knowledge that there would have to be a day of reckoning.

Time has subdued the terrible impact, the incredulous wonder of our great love. The utter rapture of quenching burning desire, the torturous despair of self-condemnation, has given way to time and maturity. The seed of our love burst, faltered, was nourished, and grew. It has flowered in the purity of faith, hope, and under-

standing. But would my son understand?

I sat there, book unopened and trembling inwardly, waiting for him to speak. For I would have to be truthful. I had never lied to Hap about anything. Could I find the proper words to explain, to make him understand that this love, no matter what society and its mores proclaimed, was not debased and vile, but a wonderful, lovely, precious thing, as right for Claire and me as it was for any properly married couple, tho' they be man and woman and we - two women.

When he spoke his voice was casual, but with vibrant undertones. "You don't ever wear a skirt around the house, do you Mom?" I looked at him. "No, I guess not." I couldn't trust myself to say any more. Indeed, what could I say? Then, "Two boys were expelled from school Thursday." I forced myself to look into his eyes. Please, dear Lord, give me the courage to face up to this, to my son. Please help him to understand. He said, "They were caught - I mean, they found out that they were que . . . homosexual." He stood and looked out the window, unable to look at me. My heart was sick, my tongue frozen. "That's all the guys could talk about." He imitated someone. "Did you hear about Jim and Perry? They're fairies!"

He turned to me, and when he spoke again, the sweet conviction in his voice, the clarity of his eyes, brought tears to mine. "Jim was one of the best athletes our school has ever had. Perry was the only boy who was absolutely sure of making the honor roll every term. They've been friends since they started school. More than friends. They were always together and nobody thought anything about it. But they were caught. They were in the woods, in back of Mason Hall, and a couple of seniors spotted them and went running to Mr. Townsend." Futile anger made his voice resonant, his eyes flash. "Everything was hunky-dory - until they got caught in the act."

He looked at me fully and unashamed. "Mom, growing up with you and Claire, I guess I just never thought about it much. Men and women, I mean. Or men and men, and women and women. I don't really know just what I do think. Someday I want a home with a wife and kids. I

know I sure couldn't love another guy like I would a girl. The thought is somehow revolting to me. To me, that is. But if another guy feels different than that, is he wrong? Is it O.K. to have odd political views, or different religious convictions and shout it to the world - even to openly seek others who might feel the same way? But when you feel different about sex - oh, that's wrong, that's sinful, that's a crime against - well, against something. The law, I guess."

My heart was full, my joy boundless. My dear, sweet, wonderful son. There are people who would say - well, after all, he was brought up to it, conditioned, as it were. Naturally, he would condone a way of life, having known no other. But he instinctively knows another! He is normal. As he says, in spite of living with it, he doesn't have it in him.

Yes, Hap and I spoke personally that night, and the subject of my relationship with Claire was the main point of issue. But I needn't have been afraid.

We were still at it when Claire came home, and for the first time Hap brought her into the discussion. We talked inversion and the psychology of it. We expounded theories of the causes of homosexuality. We discussed, into the wee small hours, every fact and fancy of homosexuality and sex deviation that we had ever heard of, or read, or known. We couldn't give any answers. To us, so many questions remain unanswerable. But I did have some questions of my own answered that night. I find I have a very normal, intelligent, understanding son, who has decided to learn psychiatry, and his aim in his future profession will be to try to help - or if you will - cure, homosexuals. And perhaps, God willing, a like enthusiasm for understanding will be taken up by others throughout the world, to finally put an end to the debasement and shame of being "Queer".

- M.L.

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QUESTIONNAIRES

Copies of the DOB sociological questionnaire are still available. We urge everyone to obtain and fill out a questionnaire so our results will be as complete as possible.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Thursday, July 3 - Moderated forum discussion sponsored by the Mattachine Society, Inc., 1830 Sutter St., 8 p.m.

Wednesday, July 9 - Monthly DOB business meeting at 2174 California St., 8 p.m.

Friday, July 11 - Gab 'n Java session at 2217 Fillmore St., 8 p.m. This informal get-together gives all a chance to discuss mutual problems. Women only.

Saturday, July 19 - DOB party for members and guests. A fun time for all. Place and time will be announced at the business meeting July 9 at which time guest cards will be available. It is requested that reservations be phoned to the office by Thursday, July 17.

Saturday, July 26 - LADDER work party. This monthly project is especially important at this time since the postage rates go up on August 1. Bring your friends and have a good time working - it's possible. From noon on at the DOB office.

Friday, August 8 - Gab 'n Java, an informally moderated discussion session for women only. At 3927 Army St., 8 p.m.

ADVERTISING ACCEPTED

THE LADDER accepts advertising. For rates and deadlines write Fran McKeever, advertising manager, THE LADDER, 165 O'Farrell St., San Francisco. We reserve the right to edit, or refuse, all copy.

Open Letter to Sandra Pine

I was touched by your article, "Yes, I Am" in the March edition of THE LADDER; touched, and a little terrified.

I see two well dressed women, perfectly groomed, at whom the finger of suspicion has never pointed; their hats fashionably perched above masks that never slip. Two perfect ladies, completely feminine. Miss Pine, might I ask what are you being feminine for? Whom are you trying to deceive? Yourself, or the well dressed, well groomed, completely masculine men you meet every day? Or your conventional families, who trust you and would never guess? Is it not possible that these normal business and professional friends are as afraid of showing you that they know, as you are afraid of knowing they know? Let us by all means keep our personal lives as private as can be; but if we are lucky enough (and many are not) to have private lives why not let them be as full and satisfying as we can possibly make them? A hand touched beneath the table; one day in seven alone; the occasional week-end; even a trip to Europe in fifteen years - is that the best you can do for your love life, Miss Pine?

Would you lose your job, your mother's love or your right to vote Republican if you let slip just a couple of small hairpins, took a flat with you friend, and started to make up for all the time you two have lost? Who is going to worry? Not your secretary - you haven't made a pass at her in ten years - we know that. Not those professional and business gentlemen - you've been giving them the red light all along. Who else is there? The ladies at your Social gatherings - they'll be only too thankful you're not after their men. And at the very worst, if the whole town knows you've left home and are sharing with a room-mate; is that going to rock anybody?

My friend and I have been together for twenty years; it took us eight years, owing to the war before we were able to live together. We're not at all smart or well groomed, and I don't honestly know if you'd say we are feminine or not. Probably in every place we've ever lived

everyone has known we are Lesbians. We rarely think about it, and we never worry about it. Certainly no one has ever hinted that our relationship is at all strange. Most of our friends are married and no one has ever refused to come to our house. We, in fact, think ourselves liked, sometimes well-liked, very rarely disliked.

Miss Pine, you are not afraid of men, mice, snakes or storms? All right; why don't you take that flat? A comfortable one, serviced, you can afford it. Let yourselves go a bit over the decor, be bold, but cosy; and, before it's too late, see to it that there's only one bedroom with a full size double bed. You won't, either of you be so well groomed in the future - but it will be worth it.

- Jule Moray

IF I WERE WATER

If I were water
I could surround you
And hide your direction.
I could give you peace
And prove your beauty
In reflection.
I could match your moods
If I were water.
I could even break you on the shore.
I would be all end and all
Beginning--more and more.
I would let you leave me,
If I were water,
But you would not forget.
Knowing my patience,
Knowing my simple power,
You would not forget.

- from VICE VERSA
Vol. 1, No. 4, Sept. 1947

LESBIANA

66. THE OTHER ONE, a long short story by Jean Garrigue included in the 1947 volume of the anthology "Cross Section" edited by E. Seaver. Simon & Schuster.

Extremely good writing and a Henry James type of psychology mark this excellent short story. The now past and dead love affair between Rosemary Bastone and her friend Miss Lehman are recreated by the prying of a curious acquaintance. One of the better treatments of the damnation possible when a mother dominates a child to the point of destroying a love affair. (This can be found in any large-to-medium public library. The authoress is known in some avant garde literary circles as an unusually good young poet.)

67. THE MIDDLE MIST by Mary Renault. Wm. Morrow & Co., 1945.

Life on a houseboat is a romantic idyll for Leo and Helen in a world apart from humdrum conventions and ways. When little sister runs away from home and joins them, however, things begin to happen! In the tangle of events and persons an entirely new balance is established among the "wanderers in the middle-mist" to the surprise of the characters involved as well as the reader. Most delightful reading!

68. TORCHLIGHT TO VALHALLA by Gale Wilhelm. Random House, 1938.

A beautifully written and perceptive novel of a young girl's finding of herself. Morgain is torn between her devotion to the talented Royal St. George and the bewitching Tomi. One cannot argue with the choice she made, yet regrettably, the book ends the moment it becomes the most delightful.

"I wish to take issue - vigorously - with F.L. of Rhode Island for her insistence upon 'stories which leave us with a feeling of bright hopefulness' as against 'strong unhappy endings'.

"It's true, as she says, that many Lesbian novels - maybe even the majority - are a 'sordid mess'. But then, even though I deplore the muck and nonsense of Ann Aldrich's books, so are the lives of many Lesbians.

"I guess it rests on what the members really desire of life. Do we really want THE LADDER to become a mutual admiration society, with all of us brightly, hopefully, positively telling one another what wonderful people we Lesbians are and how the world would be such a lovely place if we could just make all those nasty prejudiced people stop persecuting us, and continue living our lives any old way we wanted to? Or do we really want self-understanding, search and a realistic approach - which admits that a happy ending is rare in real life, not only for the Lesbian but for any person with strong convictions which are out of step with the pattern of the world in which he, or she, must live?

"Do we want THE LADDER to become, for the Lesbian, what the slick women's magazines and soap operas are for the housewife - sweet and syrupy pap based on the formula that love conquers all and that all will come right in the end if we endure?

"Or do we want an honest question, a strong-minded approach, an integrity which stands up and admits frandly 'We are thus and so. Society is otherwise. We have faults. Society has faults. Probably our faults add to the sum total of society's faults, and vice versa.'

"Isn't there anyone with the courage to stand up and admit

that sometimes there ISN'T any happy ending except, maybe, the bitter consciousness of a fight well fought, the knowledge of going down with the flags flying?

"As long as anyone can be 'depressed' by facing facts, she hasn't admitted yet that they are facts. But they are--for the present, at least, facts---hard, solid, massive, real facts which no amount of sugary happy-ending stories, full of froth and sweetness, can ever disguise. They might give the Lesbian a few minutes of escape from the world she has to live in---but they surely won't add anything to her self-knowledge or give her any added strength to face herself and the world.

"We can fight against facts. We can chip away at the mountains of misunderstanding, and try to lessen them somewhat, and look forward to the day when the walls of Jericho will crumble before our blasts. But even God's Chosen People had to spend forty years in the wilderness.

"The woman who can't face the world soberly, without needing the artificial 'lift' of a sweet, sugary love story with a 'simply lovely' happy ending---well, she'd better go and start conforming, because she is doomed to beat her head eternally against the rock of Things as They Are...and her head will probably crumble before the rock will.

"Here's to more sober understanding, and much less 'happy' positive, bright hopefulness". Certainly anyone with the courage to be a Lesbian in today's world ought to be able to dispense with the feeble aphorisms of complacent or rampant Peale-ism. There may be a power in 'Positive Thinking', but damnit, there is also a power in REALISTIC thinking---neither positive or negative, but squarely neutral, sober, balanced thinking which faces facts fearlessly, sees good and bad with equal eyes.

"Furthermore---an adolescent who goes into homosexual living starry-eyed, feeling that everything is 'beautiful, natural and fulfilling' is due for the same sort of rude shock, someday, as comes to unrealistic honeymoon brides who try to believe that their Cinderella dreams will last through the Golden Weddings, including

wet diapers, arguments with the man in the fish market, and money squabbles. By all means the young adolescent should be permitted knowledge that her feelings are beautiful, natural and fulfilling. But....she should know, honestly, what she may have to face for those same feelings, just as a woman contemplating a heterosexual relationship must face the facts of her future.

"I suppose I am, basically, arguing against any form of special pleading for the Lesbian. It is hardly fair to feel that---simply because of her 'difference' she must therefore be adjudged more sensitive and sheltered from the brutal world. If anything, she needs more rugged honesty, stronger armor against the world, and above all, a total absence of any self-pity or self-deception. The woman whose instincts coincide with the sum total of society can sometimes go through life wrapped in the cotton wool of soap-opera dreams, because she is drifting with the currents of our day and age. But the Lesbian---like the woman writer, the career woman, the political theorist, like anyone whose aims and ideals are other than the ideals of complacent faceless millions---the Lesbian is swimming in the dangerous rapids and shoals which mark the outer edges of the known territory. She cannot allow herself to carry the dangerous excess baggage of self-pity, imperfect self-knowledge, she cannot wrap herself in rosy dreams which have no basis in reality.

"THE LADDER is one of the few voices which can help such women wrap themselves in stout armor against the dangers. For heaven's sake, let's not feed them pap instead!

M.Z.B., Rochester, Tex.

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"For my part, I disagree or am inclined to disagree with the psychiatrists. Unfortunately so many of these 'wise' people accept without question, as axiomatic, premises that when critically examined are mere idle concepts - really misconceptions - handed down thoughtlessly from generation to generation, in just the same manner as for so many centuries it was gospel to hold stubbornly to the

idle theses that the earth was flat. Actually, there still exists a sect that with zeal worthy of a better cause hold fast to that doctrine. Men (and women) have actually gone to the stake, and gone joyfully, for theses just as idle and unreal. Calvin sent Servetus to the stake over a concept really just as idle, and they were both Christians, both out-and-out reformers. And look at the witch hunting in our own country - and there are no such things as 'witches'! All of us who 'think' or profess to think, or hope to think, should be exceedingly careful as to the premises we accept and the postulates we set out with as fundamental."

F.B., Sacramento, Calif.

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"How about suggesting to your readers who are writers that they try to get material into the press, and other media for the public, articles like the enclosed - 'Ex-GI Brings Korean Brother to U.S.' - which exalt true brotherly love - that is, normal but deep friendship of the kind Jesus commanded us to foment when He said, 'A new commandment I give unto ye, that ye love one another as I have loved ye'."

A Sympathizer, Pasadena, Calif.

* * * * *

"Your magazine is being read and warmly received here in Grand Rapids, Michigan. There is quite a group of us, and we have enjoyed discussing the material in your recent issues. We would be interested in participating in the survey you are preparing relative to case histories. All of us wish you every success in your undertakings."

B.A., Grand Rapids, Mich.

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"In much of the technical and pseudo-technical writing about Lesbians, there is a great deal of emphasis placed on a status called 'Butch and Femme'. Conversely in the

majority of Belle Lettres on the same subject there is no mention whatever of any such division. According to the so-called non-fiction sources this status of 'Butch and Femme' is to be found primarily on the East and West Coasts, and in the military services. This limiting to certain locality or environment helps prove my contention that this is not a natural state but an acquired one.

"I have never met a Lesbian couple equally divided either mentally or physically (sexually) into the roles of man and wife (Butch and Femme). I hasten to add many couples appear physically to be easily adaptable to these roles, but more often than not, the so-called Butch type of the pair possesses the so-called Femme mannerisms. (Ah, confusion).

"Out of a sense of not belonging to general society comes an intense struggle to speak and sometimes act in terms comparable to heterosexual living. This seems to be mostly lip service rather than actually living these roles.

"Basically we are all women who prefer other women. Perhaps this implies a somewhat larger quantity of masculine personality traits in us all. If so, and I believe it to be true, then all of us are probably more masculine than the great majority of well-adjusted heterosexual women. Why then should we negate the advantages we have by attempting to show an untrue picture to society? We are not for the most part living in a state of imitation in our

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private lives and there is no point in having a false public face. It is of course possible for an occasional couple to be made up of an extremely masculine woman and a relatively feminine one. This does not mean they live in a state of dominance on the one hand and passivity on the other.

"It has often been reiterated that one of the hardest things in a heterosexual union is the vast gulf between the sexes. Why then should we who have no vast gulf imitate those who do?"

G.D., Kansas City, Kan.

* * * * *

"I loved Barbara Stephen's cute story in the April LADDER on the Martian View. The girls at Riley's make me smile wryly. They wear pants. At Smiley's, where my set has fun, the boys wear panties.

"Those crazy girls! Wearing pants when they could go out in all the delicious new feminine dainties. We who hate pants skulk in the shadows in our trapezes 'til we enter Smiley's.

"Speaking seriously, THE LADDER is a splendid publishing venture. Its contents exhibit the sincerity, integrity and determination of the DOB. Keep the name Lesbiana for the book notes column. Lesbian is a name honored down the centuries among the greatest civilizations. Some sweet day it will be the name of our magazine. In the ancient world a Lesbian was an aristocrat, a free, cultured person, respected and admired by every class. Lesbians were noted for their beauty, grace and wisdom. They didn't wear pants.

"Now that ONE, the Mattachine Review and THE LADDER are firmly established, maybe the latter would look after the interests of the unorganized transvestites. We females in male bodies would enjoy reading about our activities and asserting claims to status. There are millions of us. (Kinsey). So many scorn us - straight people; male homophiles especially.

"For many decades the anthropological and medical literature has employed the word transvestite. I wore dresses in my teens - years before I saw that word, which I despise; and years before I knew homosexuality existed. Homophile is now put forth to replace the obnoxious word homosexual.

"This is not original with me, but I propose that we females in male bodies be called femmen. That makes me a femman. It would help clear up the impression that we are homophiles, which neither we nor they want understood.

"The research shows that male homophiles detest us feminine men because we are heterosexual. In this area of life I think femmen incline to Lesbian expressions of love. I do.

"When I was mama's boy and teacher's pet the neighborhood kids called me Lady. I am happy and proud to emulate the glorious sex, and wistful that I cannot completely metamorphose. If I could change over I would be an ardent, femin-

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ine Lesbian. That would be Paradise.

"I go to the office in Saks Fifth Avenue's handmade suits, broadcloth shirts and English shoes. My millinery is from Emme. My pumps are from Delman. I am a Chanel No. 5 girl. My wigs are ladylike, natural hair. I am a part-time woman, but I must be chic.

"Outwardly I give no indication of my delightful private life as a woman. Over-correction sometimes makes me act tough and hardboiled. I am fairly successful and a member of world-famous town and country clubs. My Metropolitan golf handicap is 13, which is my dress size.

"I know a few reputed Lesbians and undoubtedly many who reveal nothing but maybe can see right through me. A gentleman (Lady?) supposedly makes no overt overtures. How can I communicate assurances of friendly interest? I'd love to be their hostess with parties in my home for cocktails, dinner and 'Good Woman Talk' about makeup, fashions, easy ways to shorten hemlines, decoration, etc. Are they catty? Would they sneer at my costume? I wouldn't mind, if they'd observe security. Is there a common bond of confidence?

"How about THE LADDER giving us femmen a haven? A column, or a page - an occasional letter? We too could enjoy fuller lives with less restriction and more recognition. From the likes of you, too."

Lady Kay, New York, N. Y.

READERS, WRITE!

THE LADDER welcomes <u>all</u> communications from its readers, regardless of content. The staff feels this magazine is a sounding board for opinions on all sides of all questions and as such must rely on the viewpoints of readers.

We also urge you to submit manuscripts, short stories, articles, poems and artwork for covers and for inside the magazine.

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